

as a violet mass against the sinking sun,
 with a fore-
 ground of darkening greenery. The great
 truncated cone
 of the Sipan Dagħ looms grandly over the
 lake to the
 north; to the east the rocky mass of the Varak
 Dagħ, with
 white villages and monasteries in great
 numbers lying
 in its clefts and folds, rises precipitously to a
 height of
 10,500 feet; and to the south the imposing
 peaks of
 Ardost, now crested with snow, and Mount
 Pelu, projecting
 into the lake, occupy prominent
 positions above
 the lower groups and ridges.

The town of Van is nearly a mile from the
 lake, and
 is built on an open level space, in the midst
 of which
 stands a most picturesque and extraordinary
 rock which
 rises perpendicularly to a height of about
 300 feet. It
 falls abruptly at both extremities, and its
 outline, which
 Colonel Severs Bell estimates at 1900 yards
 in length,
 is emphasised by battlemented walls, several
 towers, and
 a solitary minaret rising above the
 picturesque irregularity
 of the ancient fortifications. Admission to the
 interior of
 the castle is refused, consequently I have not
 seen the
 chambers in the rock, supposed to have been
 the tombs of
 kings. The most celebrated of the cuneiform
 inscriptions
 cut on tablets smoothed in the rock is on the
 south side
 in an inaccessible position, and was with
 difficulty copied
 by the murdered traveller Schulz with the
 aid of a
 telescope. It is well seen from below,
 looking, as has
 been remarked, like an open copy of a
 newspaper. Like
 the tablets of Persepolis and Mount Elwend, it

relates in
august language the titles and deeds of
Xerxes.

The founding of Van is ascribed to
Semiramis, who,
according to Armenian history, named it
Shemiramagerd,
and was accustomed to resort to its
gardens, which
she had herself planted and watered, to
escape from the
fierce heat of the summer at Nineveh. The
well of
Semiramis and other works attributed to
her bring her